


(Re)Orientation Kit:  
a Collection of the Pieces of My Brain

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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### Abstract

This collection of artistic pieces of communication is an attempt to revisit the growth experienced by one young adult in her years as a college student. It is based on a firm belief that college life is as challenging an experience as classes. Divided into nine individual items, these pieces work together to pass on the lessons of college life both visually and verbally while simultaneously exploring the forms of communication that influence us each day.

### Acknowledgements

In a thesis as all encompassing as "life" it is hard to know where to begin acknowledging people. My deepest appreciation goes to Dean Ruebel, my thesis advisor, for enabling me to work on what was in my head, despite how odd the topic seemed. I also must offer an enormous thanks to my friend Ted Fehskens who patiently endured my phoning him everyday to read drafts and share some of his unending, well-crafted advice. Also to Robyn Kopke, Jenny Gibson, Judy Craig, Eric Laue, Erin McMullen, Bryant Rozier, Libby Marksbury who with their own special talents helped guide me through the areas where my technical expertise as lacking. Also to the facilities of the Virginia B. Ball Center for Creative Inquiry for granting me access to their technology without which I would never have been able to achieve my vision. Finally, I must offer praise to professors such as Barb Stedman, Lauren Onkey, Kathy Jaremski, Doug Noble, Linda Smith, Kip Shawger, the Goffmans and the Edmonds, whose dedication inside and outside the classroom molded the mind which is presented in this piece.

## **The Quest**

How does one squeeze life into a thesis? How does one, in four weeks, work the lessons of four years into something able to be stored in a library?

This was the quest. Four weeks ago when I realized I had to start over on my senior thesis I knew that I wanted to do something dealing with my learning experiences here at Ball State, learning experiences which go far beyond the context of one class or degree field. I wanted to revisit my growth as a person and hopefully create something that could be interesting to incoming college students. But how do you write about growth, when you're not done growing yet? Growth is a process and what you're about to read here is story of the process of creating life in a box.

## **The Beginning**

So what exactly have I learned the last four years? I started by re-reading all of my old journals, beginning with the day after I graduated from Holt High School. I write in my journal everyday so there was a great deal to read, but it was very helpful to get inside the head of my younger self. It made it very apparent how much I'd changed.

As I read I began to take notes on what I wanted to say in my thesis. It was clear from before I started that one essay would not be able to contain all these ideas, so I sorted my thoughts into 16 topics: dating, religion, failure, fresh starts, work, art, feminism, originality, beauty, risk taking, nature and simplicity, family, friendship, apathy, social responsibility and political awareness. Once organized I sat down and wrote out all my thoughts on these topics.

I grew frustrated. The essays seemed to go on and on and on and on and no matter how many words I threw at them I could not communicate the feeling and the experience of what I was trying to do. The essays were tedious to read and would not speak to an audience of anything less than academics and even they would seem bored. It isn't as though essays on dating, politics and religion haven't been done before. So the next obstacle how to make it more meaningful for readers as well as the writer.

I sat down to bang out the last essay, an essay on nature and simplicity, and as I sorted out the ideas and references I heard in my head a dialogue between Thoreau and myself. Suddenly I realized that this dialogue is what I wanted to communicate to my readers. The dialogue with nature is what I was trying to get across. There is a saying in

creative writing that authors need to show their audience what they're saying, not tell them about it. I am a creative writer, so why was I working so hard to tell them my life-lessons, when I ought to be showing them? I wrote out the *Nature in Your Mind* dialogue in 2 hours and for the first time felt that I had said what I wanted to say.

### **New Beginning**

That night I laid out all 16 essays around me on the floor and asked myself, "what do you want to show your audience about these aspects of life?" Here is that list:

Family:	the love that holds you together is bigger than differences
Religion:	God created the diversity in humanity, but we've constructed practices that do not appreciate that diversity
Failure:	Failure can be crippling but there is always tomorrow
Fresh starts:	For every bad day there is a good day that follows
Work:	It's addictive, it robs you, but I've gained power over it and so can you
Social Resp:	Everyone has a responsibility to help make the world better
Adventure:	Take chances and see where life takes you
Feminism:	Gender doesn't matter
Dating:	Fight against romance as fulfillment (bowl theory)
Friends:	Friendship is the love that fills life
Identity:	Don't be afraid to be who you are
Nature:	communing with nature reminds of how simple life really is
Beauty:	The world is on fire with beauty all around us
Apathy:	Believe in self and ability to change the world.
Art:	Express who you are
Politics:	We must be informed and act on that information

Studying this list I realized that several of the essays had the same purpose as others. Politics, Apathy and Social Responsibility, for example, all revolved around taking action to make the world better. Both Family and Friends, spoke of the love which fills life. Art and Identity were both about finding and speaking one's own voice. Failure and Fresh Starts seemed to naturally go together and feminism- an essay on how gender didn't matter- seemed to be a contradiction (i.e.- by including an essay about gender it in essence works against gender not mattering). Thus I was left with ten topics for a new round of creative essays: love, religion, failure and new beginnings, work, beauty, adventure, dating, self-expression and nature. Now I knew what I wanted to show. How do I show it?

## **Showing**

How to engage an audience with as personal, yet as grand concepts as those listed above? How do you communicate the essence of personal growth? I had known from the inception that I wanted to use art to enhance the project; I was beginning to realize that art was going to be essential. The forms of my communications were going to have to speak as strongly as the words. Once again I returned to the sketchbook and brainstormed until I had come up with ten forms of rhetoric that would show the essence of the communications. Here is the list I came up with:

Love:	Love notes.
Religion:	Scripture and stained glass
Dating:	Children's story
Self-express:	propaganda advertising for individuals
Politics:	Long, theoretical essay creating a school of thought
Adventure:	choose your own adventure story
Beauty:	Poem and painting
Work:	Documentary on me: the addiction and recovery
Nature:	Dialogue recorded with nature music in background
Failure/Fresh:	Journal entry

Ten topics. I didn't like the number. It seemed like a complete set whereas a collection of pieces of life will always be a work-in-progress. But I moved ahead on the project. In section II I will explain how each of these worked toward the vision and the story of each project as it developed.

## **SECTION II**

### *Love Notes for the Street*

As I read my old journals I came across several passages where I would plan to write a friend or acquaintance a card saying how much I cared for them and how important they were to me. I never sent those cards. The heart of what I wanted to do in this piece was to send out all those “I love you’s”.

Society has put a taboo on saying “I love you” as much as we should to all the friends, family, acquaintances and strangers who fill our lives everyday. I wanted to work against that taboo, to spread unrestrained love to everyone.

I wrote out my thoughts in concise, card-sized paragraphs, and went to my computer and started printing off the cards with collages of friends and strangers on the covers. They looked very neat and professional, but not very personal. They felt like greeting cards, not love notes.

Influenced strongly by Nick Bantock and his *Griffin and Sabine* books, I knew that hand- written correspondence is deeply personal. The act of opening an envelope to peer at the message inside is an act of intimacy in itself. So I took out some old, pink, personalized stationary and began again.

The collages also had to go. I wanted to speak to a mass of humanity, but I wanted to speak to each of them on an individual level. So I found my best photos and addressed each card to that little piece of the humanity for which I have so much love.

Too often we take people for granted and forget to let them know that their presence makes a difference in our lives. This piece is a reminder for that which is too often forgotten.

LOVE NOTES  
FOR THE STREET



A  
Note From



Betsy



Have I left a  
message in your  
ear today, saying,  
"I love you"?  
You are loved.



WE SMILE IN LINE  
at the grocery  
store—  
I LOVE YOU.

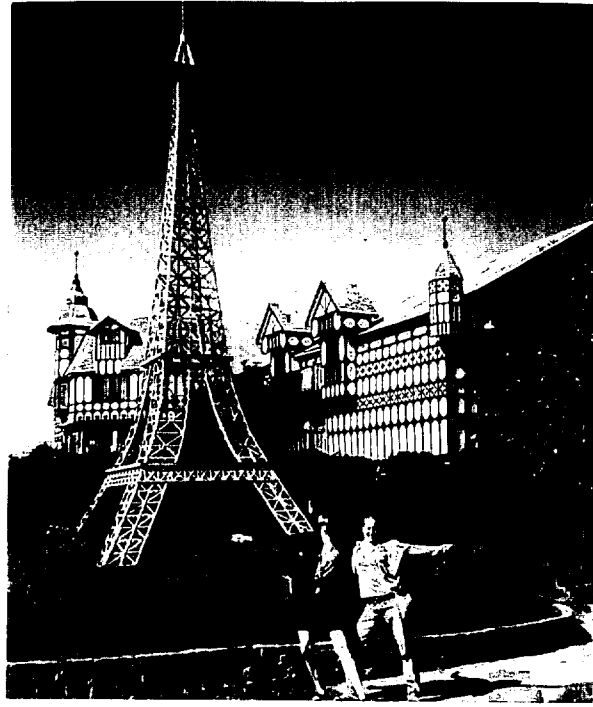


I would not want  
to forget you.  
You, stranger or  
friend, are the  
humanity which makes  
life full.



WE discuss a  
book OVER  
COFFEE—

I LOVE YOU.



You make one day  
different from the next.

Time with you is  
the only time that  
matters.



WE pass ON  
the STREET  
and you nod-  
I LOVE You.



Understanding you,  
I find myself  
Trusting you with my  
weakness,  
I find my strength





WE SING  
in the car-

I Love You.



Soon I will no longer be able  
to peer into your eyes to  
check on the health of your  
heart. Your every mannerism  
will no longer be brushed  
through me each day. But  
I will keep your smile in  
a jar - a perfect moment  
living eternally in a Utopia of  
together.



WE debate  
politics -

I Love You.



I never want to leave -  
My heart will cease.  
But to live we must  
walk away - one step,  
white knuckles -  
into the brilliance  
of tomorrow's love.

## ***Myopia***

Over the last couple of years I've become what many Christians would label as a backslider because I don't go to church often or adhere to the rules they identify with Christianity. I've always made it clear to them that I have a strong faith- I just keep it in my own way. However, conformity seems to be a norm in Christianity and myopia is its curse.

In this piece I wanted to create vision of a religion that welcomed diversity and drew from a range of sources instead of just one. Man's construct on the text on any religion is what creates a myopic lens in people, not the text itself. Therefore, I wanted to create a new construct, one that opened its arms to diversity.

Traveling in Europe and even in the US you see stained glass windows in different churches in which multi-colored pieces of glass come together to form a breathtaking picture. It seemed appropriate then that I create a stained glass window- a lens through which people could behold a variety of colors all essential to the beauty. In the window the pieces do not seem juxtaposed, they work together despite their differences. It is only when we think about their doctrinal differences that the pieces of the window seem a juxtaposition.

Constructing a new chapter of scripture seemed like the logical way to carry my essay, however I resisted it at first. I wanted to speak to Christians, as they are my fellow believers and those to whom my message could be useful. Therefore, I feared that casting my own words as scripture would be viewed as blasphemy and conceit, creating a wedge between us. After tossing the idea around I decided to go with it after all; the form seemed so imperative to getting people to look at the essence and the constructs of religion.

It was challenging to write in biblical rhetoric without coming across as pompous and disciplinarian. I wanted to speak with love to my fellow Christians, for it was the love of diversity that I wanted to convey. So I went back to the bible to revise my rhetoric. This time, influenced by the words of Christ, I tried to speak firmly but always with great love. It was one of the hardest pieces I had to put together, but it helped me solidify my own individual beliefs and might hopefully help others who read it.



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20. INFORMATION FROM THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY, WASHINGTON, D.C., 12 FEB 1942

My living brothers and sisters in Christ, let us examine the lens through which we view the world. A lens more forged in myopic doctrine than in the love and acceptance which is God.

2 It is written that there are six billion people on this Earth<sup>1</sup>. Six billion individuals crafted by our Lord. 3 Each religion services souls in ways as varied as the people to whom those souls belong. 4 However, too often we pridefully revere our own doctrine while overlooking that of others. 5 We think that God, in His omnipotence is not capable of being manifest in all the religions of His world?

6 Was it not God who in seven days created the amazing diversity of this world? Would He not be insulted to know that His children close their eyes to that diversity instead of welcoming it?

7 Buddhism teaches us to embrace impermanence so as to free ourselves from hatefulness and ignorance in pursuit of quieter minds<sup>2</sup>. 8 Is this not from God?

9 Hinduism teaches that life "undergoes endless cycles of creation, preservation and dissolution"<sup>3</sup>. Is this not the course of all God's creations? 10 Is this not from God?

11 The Q'ibwa people teach that we must humble ourselves to "recognize that no matter how much [we] know, [we] know very little of the universe"<sup>4</sup>. 12 Is this not from God?

13 Could not all of these be valuable and legitimate despite differences in points of ritual and doctrine? For is not doctrine only man-made under imposed on soul felt faith? Why must we contain God in churches?

14 In truth, I tell you that it is in church where I feel furthest from God. 15 It is in church that I am taught a doctrine prescribed to work for me and the other 300 members of the congregation. It insults my God-crafted uniqueness of spirit. God is in the ceiling fans, in the summer air and the people walking by outside. 16 He inhabits each of His creations in His own way. And it is all of these to which we should turn for blessed commune with our master.

17 The religion of the Xhosa teaches that God is in all things "so that there is little distinction between the sacred and the secular"<sup>5</sup>. 18 Still, there are those who see God only in works which use His name- those who limit God to Christian music and Christian books. God is in every work, which challenges or inspires the soul. He is in Salinger as much as Dobson, in *Rage Against the Machine* as much as *Jars of Clay*. 19 "There can be no doubt whatever that the peoples of the world, of whatever race or religion, derive their inspiration from one heavenly source," so teaches the Baha'i faith. Yet those of every religion close their eyes on the great family of believers. Let us open our minds to them that they might do the same for us.

20 Thus I sit on my front porch on Sunday mornings and worship God in the morning breeze. 21 I respectfully absorb all things and filter them into a faith as individual as God made me.

22 Do not miss God by gazing only through myopic eyes. 23 Behold all the fragments of truth and beauty in the world and begin to piece together a sense of the awe-inspiring greatness, which is God.



### ***The Tale of a Bowl***

It wouldn't seem complete to create a series of essays on the college experience without some discussion of dating. However, after the last four years, I'm no closer to understanding the insanity which is dating than I was as a high school student. In fact, I'm probably further away from understanding it. The only thing I can really say is that we are all just bowls looking for lids.

This analogy is something I used as an RA when I would have weeping girls coming to my room for cookie dough and a shoulder to cry on. Too often I would see residents or friends who had been raised to feel as though a person (especially a female) wasn't complete unless they were in a relationship. However, relationships should enhance, but not complete, a person.

In an effort to fight this miseducation I wanted to create a children's story for all those little ones who might otherwise waste their whole lives searching for completion in a relationship, never knowing that only when you are content with yourself can you be truly happy in a relationship.

After playing with the idea, I decided I wanted the little blue bowl to be genderless, as this dating dilemma is an issue for both men and women. I also wanted it to be something that young children, of the age when boys (or girls) still have cooties, could get something out of it also. I think the ups and downs of meeting people and being disillusioned by them affects all ages and this is a story of that as well.

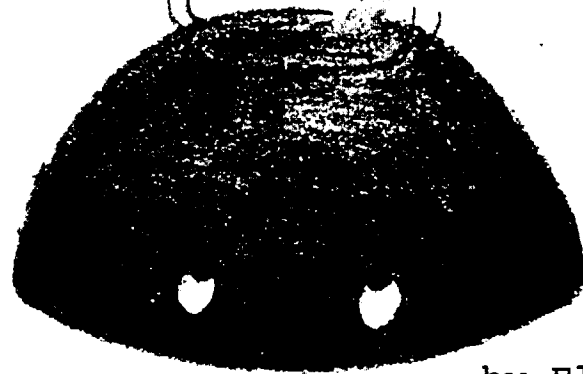
Though a children's book, I wanted to keep the look very clean and simple with a more mature feel to it, though the pictures are cute. Libby, the illustrator, and I worked together closely to come up with a look that was both youthful and ageless.

I intend to continue working with this piece and eventually turn it in for possible publication.

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# The Tale of a Bowl

*A New Fairytale Romance*



by Elizabeth Jenkins  
illustrated by Elizabeth Marksbury

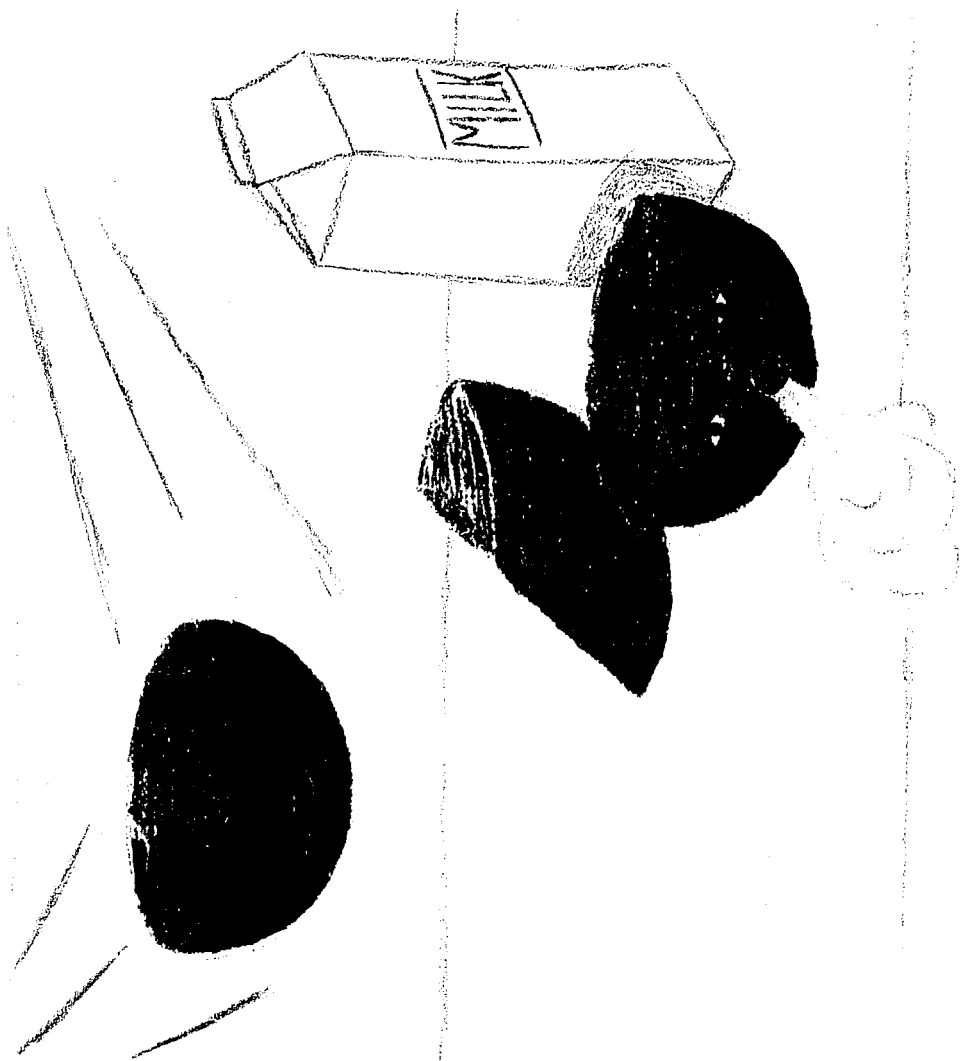
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Once upon a time there was a beautiful, blue bowl. It was a very happy bowl and always in use for it could hold soup or cereal , it was put in the micromave where it got very warm and in the refrigerator where it got very cold. But it didn't care, because the little bowl felt special to have so many talents.

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Then one day, the little blue bowl was in the refrigerator holding a jello salad and it began talking to the bowl beside it.

"It's not that cold in here today, is it?" said the big red bowl.

"Not at all," said the little blue bowl, "what are you holding?"

"Last night's pasta dinner," said the big red bowl.

"I've got jello salad," said the little blue bowl.

"I can see that," said the big red bowl, "don't you have a lid?"

"No. Should I?" said the little blue bowl.

"Of course," said the big red bowl, "Every bowl should have a lid."

"How do you keep things fresh without a lid?" said another bowl.

"How do you keep from spilling?" said the red bowl's lid.

"I guess I never realized that I needed one," said the little blue bowl.

Just then the refrigerator door opened an apple was thrown in. It bounced off the red bowl and landed smack in the blue bowl's jello salad splattering it everywhere.

"Ugh," said the owner, pulling out the blue bowl. He cleaned out the refrigerator then put the rest of the jello salad into another bowl, a bowl with a lid. The blue bowl was washed and then put in the strainer. As it dripped dry in the strainer it cried softly to itself.

"Maybe I'm not as good without a lid," it said.



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That night the bowl decided to go out and find it's lid. The bowl knew it would take courage, but it set out with faith that it's lid was out there somewhere.

First it went to the drawer where all the bowls and lids were kept. It was a frantic jumble with bowls and lids falling all over each other. At first it didn't feel like it fit in, but the little blue bowl told itself:

"Maybe if I act like one of these bowls I will find a lid."

Just as the little bowl was getting used to the jumble it bumped into a lid with a tear in it.

"What are you doing here?" said a lid with a tear in it.

"I'm looking for my lid," said the little blue bowl.

"You're what?" said the torn lid, "If you're looking for a lid, I'll be your lid."

"Great," said the little blue bowl, "but shouldn't we see how well we fit together first?"

"Nah," said the torn lid, "I'm sure we can work it out."

The little blue bowl was so excited to have found a lid. It felt proud as it was shown around by the torn lid who told all the other bowls and lids, "This is my bowl."

"Go over there and talk to those bowls for a minute will you?" the torn lid said, after a while, "I want to talk to these lids over here."

The little blue bowl didn't like the torn lid's tone, but didn't want to risk losing the first lid it had found so the little blue bowl went over to talk to the

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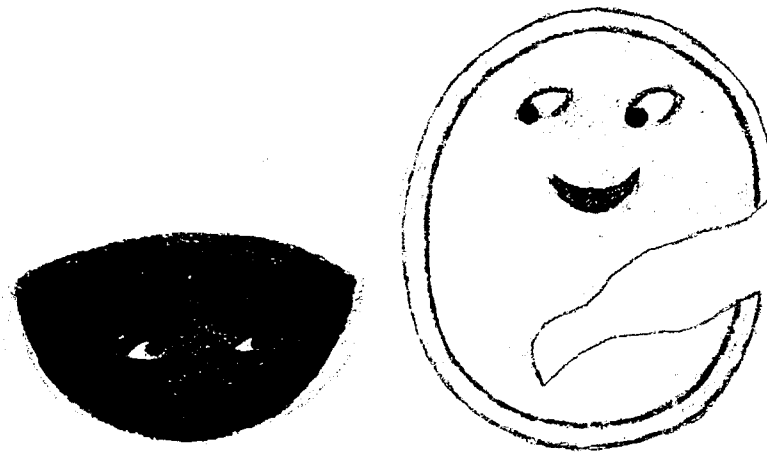
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other bowls. Just as it was begining to make friends though, the torn lid called:

"Come over here, baby."

So the little blue bowl left its new friends it was making to go see the torn lid.

The torn lid introduced her to another lid and a bowl but when the couple left the torn lid told the little blue bowl to go back to the other bowls.





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"I don't really like to be talked to that way," said the little blue bowl.

"I don't really care," said the torn lid, "If you want to stay my bowl, you'll learn to like it."

"Maybe I don't want to be your bowl," said the little blue bowl.

"You will never find another lid out there that will fit you?" said the torn lid.

"Maybe not, but you are not the lid for me," said the little blue bowl who tried to walk away.

"No. You can't leave me," yelled the torn lid reaching for the little blue bowl.

"That's no way to speak to a bowl," said a large brass lid appearing out of the jumble.

The brass lid stepped between the torn lid and the little blue bowl.

"This doesn't concern you," said the torn lid.

"Yes, it does," said the brass lid, "This beautiful blue bowl is too good for the likes of you." And the brass lid led the little blue bowl away from the torn lid, who stood there fuming.

"Are you new around here, kid?" said the brass lid.

"Yes," said the little blue bowl, "Thank you for saving me from that lid."

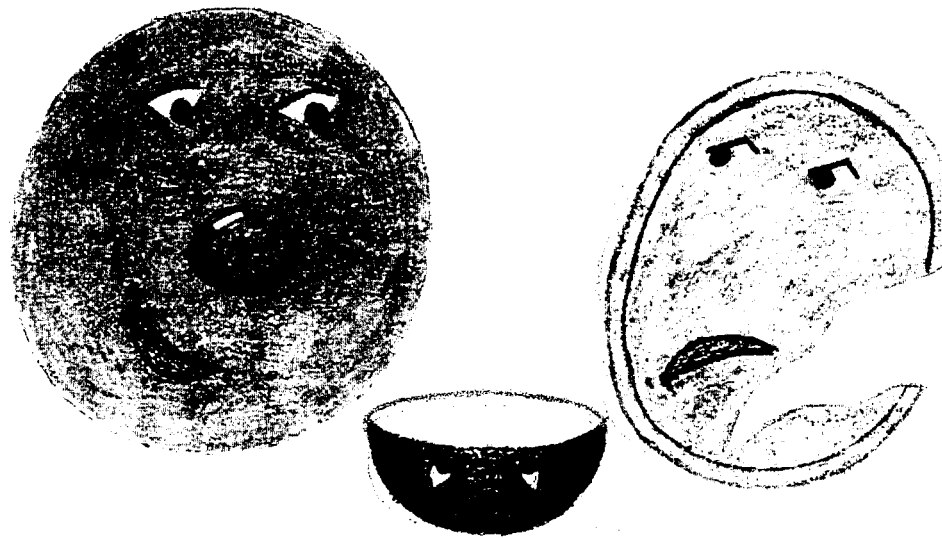
"No problem," said the brass lid, "That lid was no one to get mixed up with."

"I just wanted to find a nice lid," said the little blue bowl, "One like you."

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"Well you just found one," the brass lid said.

The little blue bowl looked up into the gorgeous brass surface of her rescuer and knew that this brass lid was the one for her.



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For a while they did everything together. They seemed to like all the same things, and the little blue bowl was so proud to have as dashing and romantic a lid as the brass lid.

After a while though the brass lid seemed to lose interest in the blue bowl. The brass lid spent more time charming other bowls and hanging out with the lids. When they talked it seemed they had less and less in common and the brass lid always seemed distracted.

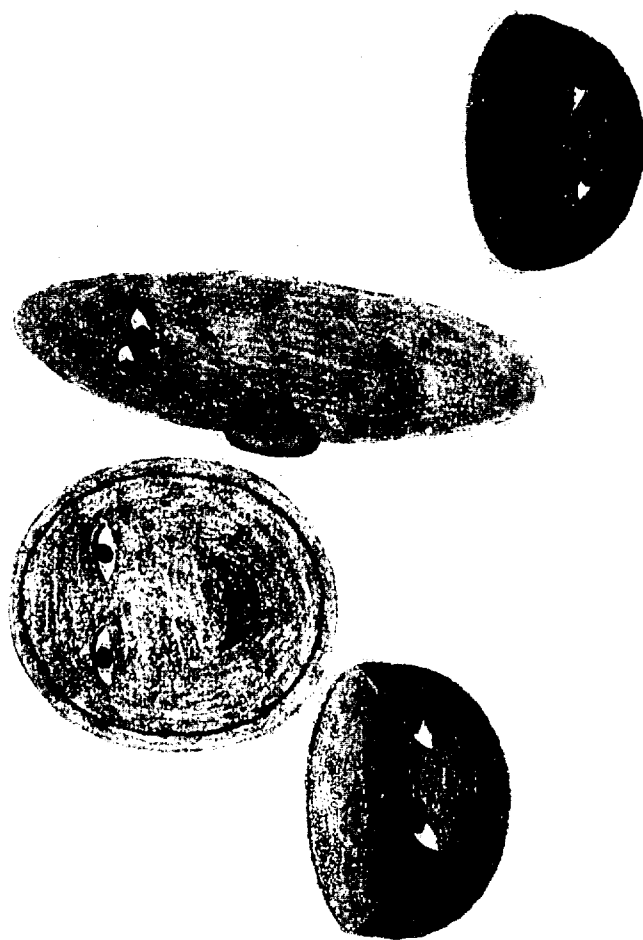
"I think maybe we don't really fit together, after all" the little blue bowl said to the brass lid.

"What?" said the brass lid, who was busy polishing himself.

"Nothing," said the little blue bowl and slipped away.

Outside the drawer, the blue bowl was very sad and wanted to give up, but decided to continue searching for a lid before the night was over and it was time to be back in the strainer. The bowl tried the counters, but none of the bowls there fit quite right. The little blue bowl tried the refrigerator, but every lid there already had a bowl. The little blue bowl tried the cabinets, but still could not find the right lid.

With a sad heart the bowl went back to the strainer and fell asleep.



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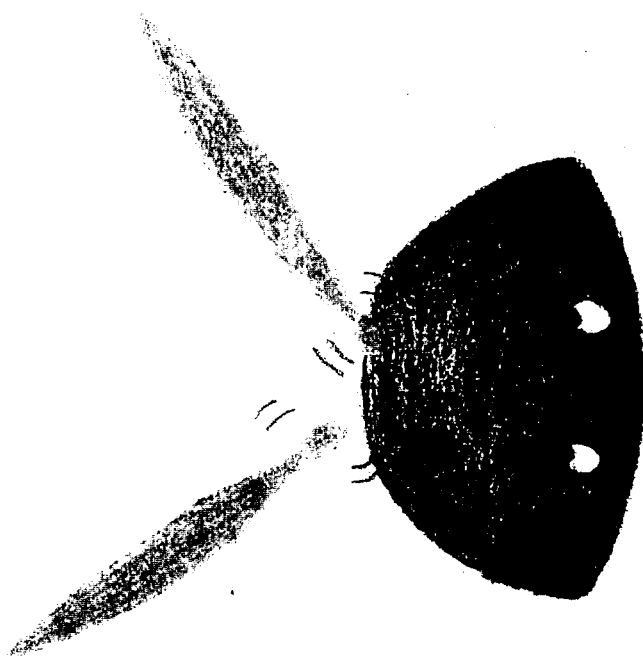
When the little bowl woke up it was being turned over on the counter, by a little pair of hands who then started beating out a rhythm on bowl.

At first the bowl wanted to be left alone to pout. But being a drum was kind of fun. The little pair of hands and the bowl played as a car drove them to a park where lots of bowls with lids were laid out on the table. The little blue bowl didn't even notice the other bowls with their lids, though, it was having too much fun being a drum.

"Wow," said the little blue bowl to herself, "I didn't even know I could be a drum. I have lots of talents."

And the little blue bowl forgot its search for a lid.





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When the little pair of hands had finished playing with the bowl, it left the little blue bowl out in the sun to take a nap. Just as the little blue bowl was about to drift off to sleep, though, something landed beside it.

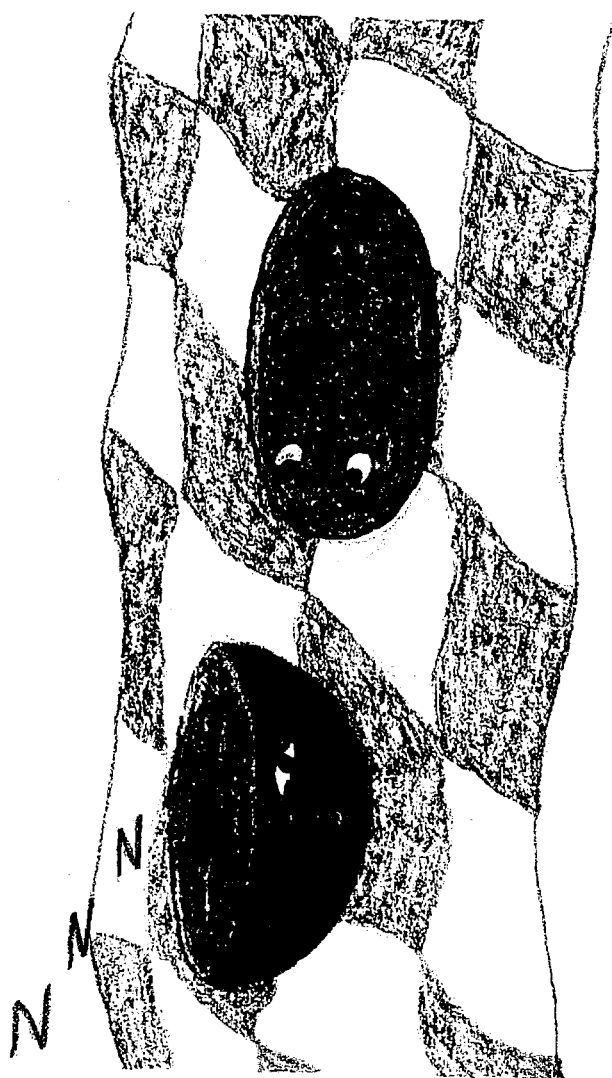
It was a lid. A nice, blue lid.

"Terribly sorry," said the blue lid, "the boys and I have been playing frisbee. I guess I got out of hand."

"That's ok," said the little blue bowl, "It's nice to meet you."

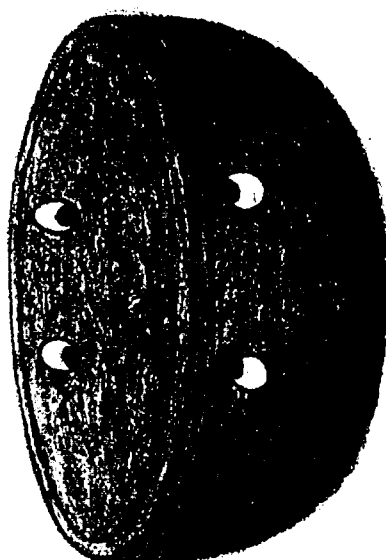
"It's nice to meet you, too," said the blue lid.

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A pair of hands scooped up the two and carried them back to the picnic basket where it put them away, snapping them together: a perfect fit.



*The End*

### *To the Government of the United States*

The original idea was to create a long heavily referenced essay in which I created a school of social thought I would call Neo-Romanticism. It would be full of people who were mystified by the beauty of life and took action against injustice and those things which keep our society from achieving its potential. It was a noble idea. I researched and outlined it, thinking myself quite witty and intelligent. All was bliss in the utopia of social thought I was creating until it came to writing the paper.

Writing the essay was torturous. After a couple of hours I came to a passage where those in my school of thought were not thinkers, academics in the ivory tower, but doers, those who took action and didn't just talk about it. Then I realized that the reason I was resisting the essay was that I didn't want to write about action. I wanted to act. I wanted to speak not to speak about speaking. Apathy was what I was trying to fight. Action would be a better weapon than theory against such a foe.

Throwing out the work that I had already done was difficult, but writing the letter was like releasing a long held breath. It rushed out of me and hopefully will rush into the readers.

It was hard deciding what to put in this essay. There are so many issues I want people to act upon, but what I wanted to fight the most was the one issue that kept the rest of the issues from moving toward resolution: apathy and people's disbelief in their own power.

Self-empowerment is required to write a letter to the government. It requires the belief that your words are important and can make a difference. It is an active step. Hopefully, seeing this letter will inspire readers to make their thoughts into actions if through nothing more than a political letter mailed to the government.

(In a side note, in my quest for activism I'll be working in Africa this fall, so it worked quite well that the "P" in my letterhead is imprinted on that continent.)

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envelopes  
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**URGENT**

Government of the United States  
Washington, DC 20526

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# Elizabeth Jenkins

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Phone: (517) 694- 9205

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May 5, 2001

Government of the United States of America  
Washington, DC 20526

Ladies and Gentlemen of distinguished authority:

I confront you today with the growing problem of apathy in our nation. It is a problem we have too long written off as contentment, but this world is far from a contented place. We are a jaded generation; apathy is evidence that we have stopped believing in our own ability to change the world.

We discuss problems like the AIDS epidemic in Africa or, on a note closer to home, the pitiful conditions of Muncie roads. We complain and express remorse but never speak of solutions because we do not feel capable of implementing a solution.

If apathy is not eradicated, humans will ho-hum their way to disaster. Our children murder each other, racial rioting continues to plague our communities, and countless problems in other nations threaten the delicate balance of the global economy. There is so much anger pent-up inside those who feel powerless to change the problems they face. Inevitably this anger will explode out through a fist or the barrel of a gun. Solving problems takes strength and patience; destruction is easy and immediate.

The age of protest and belief in peaceful resistance has passed away to be replaced by an age that polarizes between apathy and explosiveness. Should that surprise us? In books, movies, advertising- in the very idea of the American dream- we are bombarded with reminders of self as central and patience as passé.

Hunter S. Thompson likened the American dream to "that vision of the Big Winner somehow emerging from the last-minute pre-dawn chaos of a stale Vegas casino"<sup>1</sup>. It's the rags to riches story combined with instant gratification. Can such an ideal lead to anything except frustration, despair and disempowerment?

Who can our generation look to? What has changed the flow of history in the last thirty years besides economics? What is left to believe in? We wait on a hero to lead us to a solution.

A pair of Ghandi's sandals are kept in a glass case in Berlin's Checkpoint Charlie Museum. When I saw them it struck me that Ghandi's feet were the same size as mine. He was just a man (with small feet) and anybody with enough belief can leave tracks behind them as he did.

We wait on a hero, never considering that hero to be us.

We do not need some lone warrior who makes the world a better place with his super-powers. We must each be a warrior in our own way. There is a quote on the Berlin wall that reads: "Many small people, who in many small places do many small things can alter the face of the world." Let us make heroes of ourselves with the powers of heart, hand and faith.

Let us see our children born into a carpenter's age, an age of builders who approach every obstacle with the belief that they can, will and must overcome it.

Let us empower our children from an early age. Teaching (both through words and example) that every problem has a solution and complaining does nothing unless you take action.

If a child brings home from school a desire to recycle or help the homeless encourage them to come up with the plan. Treat them with maturity as they work through making it happen. Teach them patience. Teach them power.

It is easy to get bogged down by all there is to do. It is easy to simply ignore it, to shut out war, poverty, AIDS, drugs and the endless list of crisis in this world. It is easy to say that they don't affect you. So many people choose to look away. Will you?

Someone must look. They must see and know, no matter how bad it gets. There can be no resolution unless people look and act in whatever small way they can.

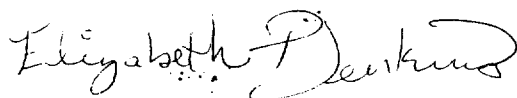
There are so many distractions in our modern multi-media lifestyle. It is easy to entertain our way through life until we are old and fat, just another in a mass of apathetics. However, it is better to run hot and cold- anything but apathetic. Apathy is a waste of life and a waste of a world with the potential to be perfect. To achieve this we must each take one step forward in faith. The momentum will build from there.

Let us end this age of disempowerment.

Let us declare war on apathy.

Let us birth in ourselves the ability to believe in all that we can do.

Faithfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth P. Jenkins". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'E' and a long, sweeping underline.

Elizabeth P Jenkins,  
One Voice

### ***Self-Expression***

Don't spend too much time looking for this essay, it never made it to a final product. I went through a lot of drafts on this topic. I played with many different styles of communication from propaganda to abstract art to dance, but nothing seemed to show how important expressing one's self is. In one of my rounds of brainstorming I wrote that my goal for this essay was to show that expressing yourself is essential to sorting out your own mind. Then I suddenly understood why this essay wasn't working. This was, essentially, one of the key elements of the entire project.

Every piece in the project is an attempt to communicate the pieces of identity which clutter my brain. The entire project is, by its nature, a communication promoting self-expression.

Every essay, not only by context but by content as well, speaks toward individuality and following your own mind. *Fortune Teller* discusses the risk involved in speaking one's own mind. *Myopia* hopes for the birth of a form of religious practice that is individualized and fights conformity. *Love Letters* urges readers to express their feelings despite social taboos.

I was trying to write an essay that would somehow say what the nine other essays were already screaming. Thus, as is often the case with attempts at self-expression, it found its home in the recycling bin.

On a note of good fortune, however, cutting this essay brought the number of essays down to nine. Nine seems like the number of a collection that isn't done being collected. This is much more appropriate for the project since one can never be done collecting the pieces of one's mind.



## ***Fortuneteller***

College is a time of trying new things and taking a gamble on what one wants to do for the rest of their life. I came to college as an architecture major, because I wanted a safe degree field, one where I was sure to get a job and earn money. It didn't make me happy though so I decided I had to hold my breath and leap into the very unsafe waters of creative writing. This was a painful growth experience for someone who liked to always have a plan for life, but over the last few years I've learned that sometimes things are best when a person takes a chance and goes in a new direction. With this I hoped to give people an opportunity to experience the fun of taking chances and seeing where their fortune lies.

This piece is by far my favorite conceptually. I had originally intended to do it as a choose-your-own-adventure style novel, but with *The Tale of a Bowl* I already had a book and I wanted something readers had to be more physically involved with. My next thought was to do a board game. I was explaining this to a friend when, through some misunderstanding, he thought I meant one of the fortunetellers children make in elementary school. I literally leapt at the idea. It was bold, it was chancy, and it spoke of seeing where life takes you and of childhood- an age full of new adventures and exploration. Also, it would be absolutely impossible to read unless you physically involve yourself with it. Never was so perfect a union made between form and content.

The tricky part was fitting an essay into a fortuneteller. I had my roommate (a fourth-grade student teacher) figure out how to fold a fortuneteller for me. Then I got started on Freehand, coming up with the layout.

One of the most difficult things was wittingly my thoughts down to concise, efficient paragraphs (a recurring dilemma in this series of essays). Then, after creating the first draft came a new dilemma- editing. How do you edit something like this? How can you put into a logical flow a series of sentences with over one hundred different configurations? Talk about circular logic. In the end I broke it down into three levels. The first level, squares 1, 5, 7 and 4 are calls to action; this level sings the anthems of risk-taking. The next level, 3, 9, 12 and 16, are the lessons and stories of risk-taking. And finally in the most interior level are the fortunes. Go ahead, choose a number at random and see where it takes you.

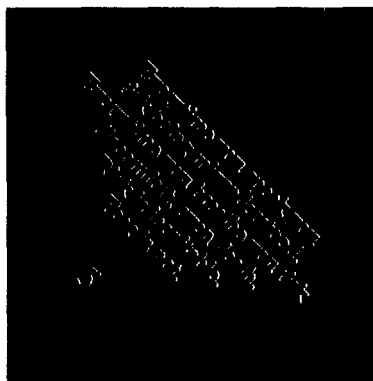
out for hamburgers. What is so about a bad experience? Aren't bad experiences as new and exciting as good ones. In fact it is the bad experience that make better stories and teach us about ourselves.

16

Discover your own fortune!

Disaster Strikes. You Fail. It Hurts.  
Now see what happens next.

For a long time I would not try Chinese food because I didn't think I'd like it. Then a boy asked me for Chinese and I agreed. When my friend came I discovered I HATE Chinese food. I tried to eat it but I couldn't, so we tossed it and went



But for the most part fear of risk can only hold you back.

12

There are risks that are not worth taking like gambling on things like drugs, unprotected sex or selling your tongue to a human pube (although that would be an experience to remember)

Nothing is gained without taking chances. Nothing successful ever happened without risk involved.

1

#### Folding Instructions:

1. Cut along outside line.
2. Lay face down on a flat surface and fold 4 corners into center.
3. Flip over and again fold four corners into center.
4. Fold in half and then in half again.
5. Put thumb and index fingers under blue, aquamarine, red and lavender flaps.
6. Push up and into center to form fortune catcher.

#### Making your Fortune Catcher Catch:

With your thumbs and forefingers inside the flaps first pull for fingers away from your thumbs and then push your fingers apart with the balls of your hands still together. Alternate back and forth.

#### Game Instructions:

1. Read and select one of the four quotes.
2. Whatever Number is at the bottom of that quote open you fortune catcher that many times.
3. Repeat with two interior quotes
4. Again select one of the two quotes, but after selecting lift up that tile to reveal your fortune.
5. Be random, take chances and see where life takes you.

### ***Fire***

This was the essay topic that inspired the entire project. I've been carrying "fire" around in my heart and head for a long time and the need for an opportunity to express it compelled me to pursue this sort of thesis.

Too often people overlook the wonder of the world around us. I wanted to capture that wonder for them in a way they could not ignore. Originally it was to be a painting in abstract cool colors swirling into a beautiful montage of brush strokes. However, after playing with roughs of the paintings they didn't feel right. I tried hot colors. Still no good. Then I saw the photograph by Gordon Parks. That photograph was speaking exactly what I was trying to paint and doing it better because, Parks was using real life. It was reality on fire with beauty that I wanted to show not a painted canvas. The frame creates the perfect finish in which this moment of life on fire will hang suspended forever. Seeing it now I can't imagine it looking any other way.

# Fire

Maybe this is heaven.  
This world we inhabit, so full of fire.  
A gum wrapper beside the road  
Catches a flash of evenings light,  
A stunning piece of the painting:  
"Life"

"Sometimes there is so much beauty it hurts"

Life and fire  
Bold in texture  
Spinning in a kalaidoscope of  
Newness every second.

"That which isn't flint is tinder . . .  
the whole world sparks and flames"<sup>2</sup>

Every phone booth  
petunia  
hot dog cart  
Brush strokes  
On fire.  
Life.

Brush strokes  
Burning  
Every mortal  
Devine en

Brush strokes  
Red and Black  
Ease would make a hell of boredom  
Every paradise,  
Has problems.

Solve them.

"Come to this world to accept it"  
"if only's" are a waste

"Steep thyself in a bowl of summertime"<sup>1</sup>  
A bowl of brush strokes  
A bowl of fire.

**The truly fantastic, awe-inspiring, career-making, grade deciding piece of work  
I didn't do**

The last four years have been a constant battle for me to balance my priorities and my work. College students, in particular, are constantly bombarded with things to do as professors, bosses, and the demands of our future careers put things on our to do list. All of them seem so important, it's easy to forget that health, love and the pursuit of a happy life are equally as important.

As I struggle to find balance I always feel connected to musicians who, like me, all too often get caught up in the magic of accomplishment and sacrifice their relationships, time and their health. Sooner or later, though, most realize that their work isn't worth the life that it costs them.

Through creating a VH1 spoof about my struggle to overcome an addiction to work I had hoped to be able to share my story in an entertaining and inspiring way. I really enjoyed writing the script and filming the interviews with Robyn and Jenny. Of all the pieces in the collection I was the most excited by this piece.

The morning came when Bryant and I were to film. I had been up for 56 consecutive hours working to get my thesis done. It was 3:30 am. The birds were sounding the first calls of the morning and I was sitting at my desk at the Kitselman Center revising the script. As I read the script I suddenly realized I had fallen back into the old addiction. I wrote the phone message from life at that moment. No matter how wonderful or important a piece of work seems, life is still waiting. Work is so easy to get caught up in, it's always pressing, but sometimes we have to give voice to those priorities that don't leave post-its. The VH1 piece may never be created and go out to inspire change in this world, but it inspired me to change that night.

Through following my own advice I think I created a piece which communicates the trials and struggles of a recovering workaholic far better than the VH1 piece. However, for the benefit of curious audiences, I include here a clean transcript from what would have been a wonderful bit of work.

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\*Images, please\*

Draft 4

VH1- Behind the Magic

Revise

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To EP Jenkins  
Time 3:30 am Date 5/2/01

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Announcer: I  
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in

While You Were Out

M Life  
of the world beyond the blinders  
of work

Film  
B-roll

Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Telephoned ☐ Please call back  
☐ Called to see you ☐ Will call again  
☒ Left the following ☐ Returned your  
message: \_\_\_\_\_ call

Fun US, a job  
g-set elaborate  
A she costumed, died  
the mind, That fall  
at the show She worked  
these on 42nd Street  
white reckless  
3 months  
or completed  
set of  
stones via  
TV pilot  
white  
balancing  
classes  
2 part-time  
jobs

Announcer: An  
designs, costur

EP: It  
on it's feet and th  
plates spinning

I am outside your office  
Consult your priorities.  
I won't wait.

-Betsy  
Operator

A- Her

Go!

Go!

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more specific.  
don designs,

## VH1- Behind the Magic

Announcer: She was a blossoming theater design superstar, starting off on the fast-track to Hollywood fame when the frenzy of theater life caught up to her. Tonight, EP Jenkins, on VH1's Behind the Magic.

{Roll Title Credits}

Announcer: EP was born in the small suburban town of Holt, Michigan. It was here on the Holt High School stage that she got her first taste of technical theater.

EP: I remember one of the first things I did was staple two pieces of fabric together to make a fish. It was incredibly fun, from day one I knew that I loved it. There was just something about doing things like building dragons and lagoon creatures that was just sort of magically.

Announcer: It was magical yes, and that magic she carried with her to college.

EP: It's funny because I went to college to be an architect. That didn't even last 3 weeks. I don't know what I was thinking, I could never color inside the lines.

Announcer: EP enrolled at Ball State University where she learned all too quickly the world of compasses and t-squares was not for her. Three weeks into her freshman year she changed her mind and changed her major. She was now a theater design major with a second major in creative writing.

EP: I had written some short stories and things in high school and I was an avid journaler- I had to get out all the stuff that built up in my head, but theater design was going to be my career. I studied costume and scenery design and knew if I worked really hard I could get work.

Announcer: With her new career came a new job. Betsy Jenkins from Holt, Michigan was now EP Jenkins and Ms. Jenkins worked hard. In the spring of 99 she completed her first costume design for a show called *Lie of the Mind*. That fall she worked on *42<sup>nd</sup> Street* while simultaneously designing the scenery and costumes for *Reckless*. Three months later she was again designing scenery and costumes, this time for a television sitcom pilot, all the while balancing 6 classes and 2 part-time jobs.

EP: It was a huge adrenalin rush to work. I'd round the clock for days getting the show on it's feet and then I'd have to catch up on homework and everything else. Keeping all those plates spinning was a constant high.

Announcer: But all that adrenalin was beginning to wear her out. EP's friends recall that the signs of strain were beginning to show.



Robyn: (a friend) I've known a lot of tech majors and they do tend to disappear off the face of the planet whenever their shows go into rehearsal, but they're usually really excited about the final product and having their work onstage. For EP, though, as the years went by it seemed like she got started to more disappointed with the final product.

Announcer: EP's lifestyle was beginning to take over her identity.

EP: I felt like I had two identities. Betsy who loved life and seeing friends and writing and then there was EP- my work. And it felt like I was forgetting how to be Betsy, like EP was all that was left.

Announcer: The dream had begun to fall apart. When Behind the Magic returns EP's passion turns to addiction and a late night crash shatters her dream forever.

EP: I didn't know how to stop.

{Commercial break}

Announcer: EP Jenkins began young splitting her time between theater and writing. At college she poured her heart into a career as a theater designer. She was mystified by the magic of theater but her love was becoming a habit on its way to disaster.

EP: When I used to walk through the auditorium before we put in the show, I would be so overwhelmed by the endless potential of an empty stage that I would have to sit down to absorb all that energy. But felt like I never really had enough time to accomplish what I wanted to when I was working. I was always at the bottom of this avalanche of work though and I didn't know how to stop.

Announcer: She was spinning out of control with no escape in sight.

EP: I felt like I was missing the best part of life. I kept hearing myself say "If only this, then I'll be alright" or "Once this is over, then I'll be happy" and I realized this was no way to live, but I didn't know how to function if I wasn't in a constant rush of adrenalin.

Jenny: (a friend) The dark circles under her eyes were growing and she didn't smile like she used to. She was getting very cynical. And I remember I just liked her better when she wasn't working on a show.

Announcer: EP's life was in a tailspin of adrenalin addiction with no way out. Then on the night of February 25<sup>th</sup> 2000, her world came crashing down.

EP: I was in my bedroom, it was very late at night and I had piles of stuff all over my bed which I hadn't slept in days. Then, all of the sudden I couldn't breathe. I

just didn't have any strength left to fight through it anymore. All the adrenalin, all the stress had just beat the hell out of my body. I lay there just crying my heart out.<sup>1</sup>

Announcer: But in that cold February night came a realization from a very unlikely source.

EP: I remember I was playing my roommates Counting Crows CD and there's a part in one song where ?? chants "You don't want to waste your life" again and again and then starts chanting: "Change, Change, Change"<sup>2</sup>. And suddenly I realized I had to change. I had to find my way out of the shadows of tech theater that were once so magical but now were sucking my life into a darkness.

Announcer: When we get back EP finds her way out of the darkness and into the light of a new life.

{commercial break}

Announcer: From small town fun to the end of a dream of a magical future EP Jenkins walked a hard road trapped by love and addiction. In the end her dreams of working in theater came crashing down around her. And she was left to picking up the pieces and trying to rebuild her life. The week after she decided to leave theater was one of the hardest in her life.

EP: I had to push through the end of the show I was working on. And I had to face all the people who I'd worked with, who had spent a lot of time and energy teaching me and try to explain to them that I was leaving and why. I remember once I was up in the light booth looking down at a rehearsal going on onstage. All my tech friends were down below talking to each other about the show and work and stuff. I was sitting there drinking in all the pieces of my heart in their burnt out beauty. My heart screamed to run down there and join in the frenzied dream. But I knew that it was a nightmare. That I wanted to be alive, not living for my work.

Robyn: It was really hard for her those first few months. She didn't really see her theater friends much because they were all still working round the clock and she wasn't working with them any more. She was trying to make new friends and trying to write more. Theater had been such a big part of her life. It was like rebuilding her identity.

Announcer: But little-by-little EP was forging a new identity better than before.

EP: It was so hard. Free-time freaked me out. I'd never had any before, I didn't know what to do with myself. I started writing again. But I didn't know how to work without deadlines and 15 people hounding me every minute. I missed my ulcer.

---

<sup>1</sup> Journal, February 25, 2000

<sup>2</sup> Counting Crows ???

Jenny: Workaholism is such an admired addiction in our society. It's a respected self-destruction. I admire her for taking charge of her life.

Robyn: It's just nice to have Betsy back again, to have her not an adrenalin junkie.

Announcer: On March 20, EP turned 22. That night she fulfilled her last lingering obligation to the theater department and started the first day of a new beginning as a writer. It's been hard but she's beginning to see her new dreams come true.

EP: It's amazing for me to be able to work on something and at the end to be really proud of what I did. I actually have time to achieve my full potential. I never have to say, "Well it's fine considering I threw it together at 3 am." I finally feel like I'm living by priorities.

Announcer: {slow motion shot of EP, Robyn and Jenny walking arm-in-arm down the sidewalk laughing} EP learned that friendship and life are what she values and these things help her continue to live based on the realizations of that February night.

EP: I still feel the pull whenever I walk into an auditorium. Everyday I have to consciously maintain a balance between work and life. But at least now I know that they are two separate things.

Announcer: After turbulent years of work, magic and adrenalin addiction EP Jenkins has finally embarked on a path that brings her satisfaction and does not rob her of the joys of friendship, love and adventure. We know we haven't heard the last from this powerhouse voice behind the magic.

{roll closing credits}

### ***Nature in Your Mind***

Hopefully this piece will inspire a dialogue in the listeners as to what their necessities are and how they can find quieter minds. The addition of music, which opens peoples minds and prepares them for the message was also essential. It brings their minds to a calmer level where they will be ready to think about their own existence and what they need to change.

Since I was a child I've had a spiritual connection with nature. It is where I go to find stillness and answers. I think this world could use a little more stillness, simplicity and peace. Hopefully this piece will help inspire that.



# *Nature in Your Mind*

*Walk with Henri David Breau around Barb Stedman's pond,  
May 6, 2000.*

*Journal 1999*

When I came across the story of my night on the rocky shores Lake Michigan, I knew that it was a pivotal piece in my journey through the perils of failure. Failure is such a personally deprecating experience. It takes great honesty and strength to admit failure and to rise again the next morning with strength.

My college career was marked by repeated failure but in doing this piece it was my own personal victory. My journal is where I lock my most personal thoughts away from other's eyes. Openly sharing the pain of that night and other failures was the best way to convey that deep personal pain. It was hard to share it, but the only way that I could show what that growth takes.



11-20-21

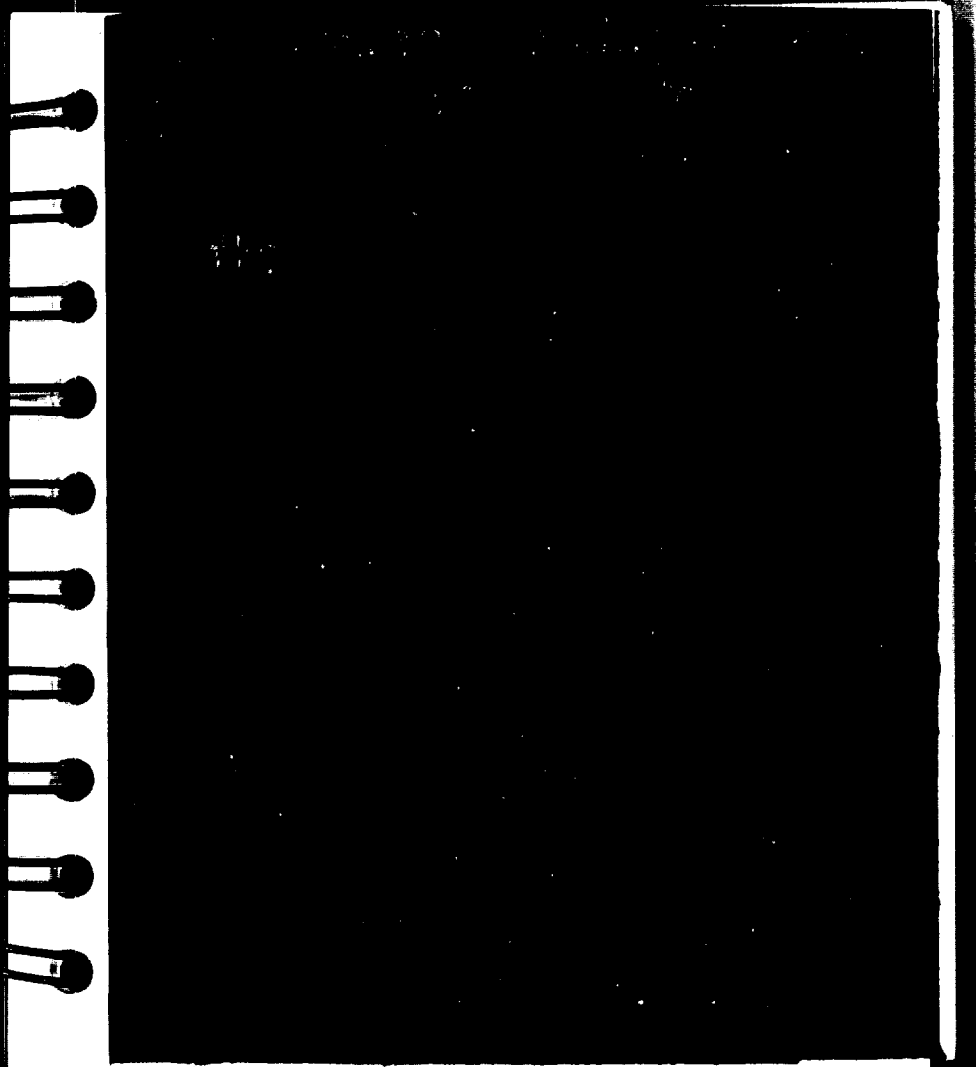
Visited the cemetery at  
Hartford, Conn. and saw  
the graves of the  
Rev. Dr. J. H. Burleigh  
and his wife. The  
Rev. Dr. Burleigh was  
a prominent minister of  
the Methodist Church.

Also visited the  
grave of the Rev. Dr.  
J. H. Burleigh's wife.  
The Rev. Dr. Burleigh  
was a prominent minister  
of the Methodist Church.  
He was born in  
Hartford, Conn. and  
died in Hartford, Conn.  
He was a member of  
the Methodist Church.



November 22: I am a solid  
hand, and I am a solid  
later I am a solid.

Some time ago, I was  
telling you about the  
and so I am a solid  
star, and I know  
that I am a solid  
and I am a solid  
another failure. Perhaps  
I should have stuck it  
but I am a solid. I am  
trying to be happy. I am  
of working so hard to  
to a career I no longer  
for simple because I am  
means failure. I am a  
I am a solid, and I am  
of all the surveys I was  
to here, along the shoulder.



[illegible]

There's nothing more  
intimidating than  
a blank sheet of paper

June 3

I went for a run early this morning. I didn't sleep much last night, it was too dark. But this morning there is light and joy. It is awkward learning how to embrace it without knowing where to hold on. I'm dizzy with moving in this redefined self. The decisions and pains of the past are still lodged in my veins, but my horoscope reads:

You are blissfully oblivious to the regeneration going on inside you. Mental batteries are recharging after your recent brain pains that resulted in stress (toxins) now undergoing a mass exodus from your body. Our advice: Drink tons of H<sub>2</sub>O and remember being a bit gone means your gearing up and getting rid of old gunk.

It's good to sweat, to uncover my own strength and conquer hills before me instead of behind. I must pursue my dreams despite fear. "Feel the fear and do it anyway" as Eleanor Roosevelt would say. I've wasted so much time weaving safety nets it's time to test the wire.

I need to write. This I love. This I  
might be good at. It terrifies me,  
but I must hold on with fingernails  
and faith. What other choice do I  
have? If I give up failure is  
guaranteed. And if I fail, I've failed  
before. It hasn't kept me down.  
There's always the next morning.

White  
Space  
Mine

### **SECTION III**



## **Other Themes**

When I started I was worried that there would be no common bond between the nine essays. Without much effort, however, the essays grew entwined. Perhaps this is because of their common source- how can nine essays drawn from the deep interior of one's mind not be entwined? Perhaps because they were all written and developed simultaneously, the overlaps flowed easily from my already warmed up brain. Either way, I am pleased with the result

One common theme I enjoyed playing with a great deal was rhetoric and forms of communication. As a creative writer, opening myself up to playing with forms of communication that we see everyday but take for granted such as post-its, scripture and fortunetellers, was like opening up an art box with new and exciting media inside. I got to play with how humanity speaks as well as what they say and to explore the power of the human word we take for granted. Scrapping the attempt to write personal essays telling the story of my personal growth and explain my new philosophies was the best decision I could've made. It really helped me to realize that how you say something is as important as what you say.

## **Reorienting Myself**

The very last piece added to this project was the title. I knew I was creating a box of artistic pieces that the audience could interact with. I knew they were artistic pieces of and also reflections on the art of being alive. I knew I wanted a title that called readers to pick up and interact with the pieces. But what would that title be?

I tried Art Box, Life Box, Activity Box, Memory Box, Memory Kit, and countless others. Every day it had a new name. It was only when I presented the work to some friends, explaining that the project was a process of me revisiting the lessons of the last four years but targeted at passing those lessons on to incoming freshman, did they suggest the idea of a (Re)Orientation Kit.

I would not suggest this as a piece to be handed out to freshman, but I would hope that any underclassmen that stumble upon it might take a lesson from it. For me it has been a journey of relearning lessons and values forged in the last four years. All too often, as is clear with the Work essay, through the process of creating the piece of

communication I have had to relearn that life lesson. And as I am about to walk across a graduation stage into a new life, the opportunity to solidify priorities has been wonderful.

In the end, all that we have to carry with us are lessons and stories collected from our lives. These are the only things that endure. Over the last four years I have discovered my own voice and gained the strength to use it. Once timid I can now stand on my own, unashamed, and present to a world of strangers these pieces of my brain.

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